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NEWS RELEASE

Tax Commission investigators arrest two in Provo; uncover possible multi-state auto theft ring

On March 26th, investigators from the Motor Vehicle Enforcement Division (MVED) of the Utah State Tax Commission executed a warrant to search a home and another to search a business in Provo while investigating alleged insurance fraud. While there, agents found a dismantled vehicle that had been reported stolen to the Salt Lake City Police Department. Investigators believe it was an insurance scam and that associated individuals may have connections to a multi-state auto theft ring.

One man is being sought and two men were arrested on charges that include insurance fraud, felony drug possession, illegal gun possession and filing fraudulent police reports.

Operating on a tip, MVED believed the owner of a late model truck made a false stolen vehicle police report so that insurance money could be collected. Further investigation showed, in fact, that the owner had conspired with a Provo businessman to dismantle, or "chop" the truck. The business owner was one of the arrested individuals. Taken into evidence were the truck's VIN plates and title as well as additional personal property claimed stolen along with the truck, all recovered from the residence of the vehicle's owner. Expanding on the investigation, focus quickly shifted from insurance fraud to a possible connection to a California auto theft ring when agents discovered additional evidence that could tie at least one of the arrested men to the illegal operation. Over the past year, approximately 49 stolen vehicles have been stolen from California but later recovered by MVED here in Utah. Some of what was found at the residence included the titles and license plates from these stolen vehicles. Investigators are currently working with the Provo police department and the State of California in a combined effort to curb this auto theft ring.

MVED regulates the auto industry, investigates motor vehicle fraud and auto theft. Investigators regularly encounter the criminal activities such as auto theft, possession and manufacturing of illegal drugs and illegal possession of firearms. MVED investigators work pro-actively by setting up undercover sting operations to attract and nab criminals dealing in these illegal activities.